

REMARKS

Claims 1-5, 7-13 and 15-18 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 7 and 12 have been amended. Claim 6 has been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-11 under 35 U.S.C 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0072875 to Barney et al., hereafter Barney, in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0147362 to Dick et al., hereafter Dick. This rejection is moot as to claim 6, which has been canceled.

This rejection is respectfully traversed. Independent method claim 1 and storage medium claim 7 have been amended to distinguish from the combination of Barney and Dick. For example, amended independent method claim 1 recites:

"in said master module:
determining a time synchronization function is enabled;
determining a time difference between said communications network time and said module reference time;
determining that said determined time difference is greater than a first limit, and less than or equal to a second limit;
determining a rate of correction based on a predetermined synchronization interval and said determined time difference;
automatically adjusting said network communications time to synchronize with said module reference time gradually, using said correction rate, over said predetermined synchronization interval; and
periodically communicating said network communications time to one or more other modules connected to said communication network.

Support for this amendment is in the specification at page 5, lines 22-27, page 7, lines 13 and 14, page 8, lines 9-19, and page 13, line 23, to page 14, line 2.

Barney's master merely broadcasts its local time as the official network time. Barney's other modules perform the functionality described in paragraphs 0019, 0020 and 0021, which were cited by the Examiner. Therefore, Barney lacks the steps recited in amended independent claims 1 and 7. Dick, which was cited for a different purpose does not supply the deficiency of Barney. Therefore, amended independent claims 1 and 7 and their dependent claims 2-5 and 8-11 are unobvious in view of the combination of Barney and Dick.

In the discussion of the rejection, the Examiner inadvertently included claims 13 and 15-17, which were rejected together with independent claim 12 on a different combination of references.

For the reason set forth above, it is submitted that the rejection of claims 1-5 and 7-11 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) is obviated by the amendment and should be withdrawn.

The Office Action rejects claims 12, 13 and 15-18 under 35 U.S.C 103(a) as unpatentable over Barney in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,709,347 to Kirk, hereafter Kirk, and further in view of Dick.

This rejection is respectfully traversed. Independent apparatus claim 12 has been amended similarly to independent claims 1 and 7. As discussed above, Barney's master merely broadcasts its local time as the official network time. Barney's other modules perform the functionality described in paragraphs 0019, 0020 and 0021, which were cited by the Examiner. Therefore, Barney lacks the steps recited in amended independent claims 1 and 7. Kirk and Dick, which were cited for different purposes do not supply the deficiency of Barney.

Therefore, amended independent claims 1 and 7 and their dependent claims 2-5 and 8-11 are unobvious in view of the combination of Barney, Kirk and Dick.

For the reason set forth above, it is submitted that the rejection of claims 12, 13 and 15-18 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) is obviated by the amendment and should be withdrawn.

It is respectfully requested for the reasons set forth above that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) be withdrawn, that claims 1-5, 8-13 and 14-18 be allowed and that this application be passed to issue.

Respectfully Submitted,

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